



# MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN TASK FORCE

## MEETING NOTES

**MARCH 9, 2004**

**4:00 P.M.**

**ROOM 113**

Task Force Members Present	Nye Bond, Susan Dunn, Duane Eitel, Margaret Hall, Elaine Hammer, Rick Krueger, Marian Malone, Bill McCoy, Tad McDowell, Greg MacLean, Eric Miller, Oscar Pohirieth, Patte Newman, Gordon Scholz, Terry Werner. (Kit Boesch absent)
Resource Panel Members Present	Mike Brienzo, Terry Genrich, Randy Hoskins, Steve Sissel, Sandy Strickland, Larry Worth
Others Present	Gary Bergstrom, Mike Heyl, Joe Kern, Alvin Lugn, Brian Mathers, Brian McCollom, Scott Peterson, Brian Praeuner, Alan Wickman, Kent Morgan, David Cary, Michele Abendroth

### Agenda Topics

#### 1. Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Morgan called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and welcomed those present.

#### 2. Public Comment Period (10 min. maximum)

Alan Wickman noted that Joe Kern had mentioned the idea of a bicycle/pedestrian coordinator at the Open House. Mr. Wickman encouraged the Task Force to make this need a high priority. Ms. Malone asked if the coordinator would be a paid position. Mr. Wickman replied that he envisions the position being a full-time paid City employee.

#### 3. March 8<sup>th</sup> MMT Open House

Mr. Morgan stated that he felt the Open House was very well attended and that many good questions were asked. Ms. Malone stated that she felt any future Open Houses should start earlier in order to accommodate bus schedules.

#### **4. Task Force Transit Service Characteristics Exercise Results - David Cary**

Mr. Cary reviewed the results of the survey completed by the Task Force members which sought their input on eight different transit concepts. The characteristic receiving the highest score was “hours per day buses operate,” followed by “how close is nearest bus stop.” The characteristic having the least support was “maintaining reasonable fare structure.”

Mr. Cary drew the group’s attention to the “Survey Form”, which was mailed to the members of the Great Plains Trails Network. The results from the survey will be tabulated and presented at the next Task Force meeting.

#### **5. Transit Services Overview - Brian McCollom**

Mr. McCollom began his PowerPoint presentation by noting that his presentation today will focus on transit only. Three factors to consider are *existing factors affecting transit demand*, *service design options*, and *funding sources*. In terms of transit, Lincoln has low to moderate density. Normally, about 4,000 people per square mile are needed to support a conventional fixed route service. In most areas, Lincoln does not meet that statistic. He concluded that at best, there will be moderate ridership overall. It is interesting to note that Lincoln is very compact, so many trips by car can be made in 10-20 minutes. Consequently, most people will travel by car because it is less time-consuming than traveling by bus. There is also abundant parking that is moderately priced and convenient, which is a reason for people not to use transit. Mr. McCollom stated that Lincoln needs to focus on opportunities, such as route and service type, hours of operation, and the level of service.

In terms of design features of a transit system. The most common system is a *radial route network* from downtown. The advantage to this system is that there is direct service to downtown. The disadvantage is that you can’t travel very easily to other destinations. A *pulse-scheduled radial* is the design that StarTran follows. In this system, all of the buses arrive and depart from downtown at the same time. With one transfer, you can get to any place in the City. The problem with this system is that it requires parking space downtown for buses, it is not adaptable to change, and there are more “long/short” routes since downtown is not the geographical center of the City. Also, StarTran does not have all of the buses arriving in downtown at the exact same time, making transfers more difficult. A *grid route network* provides service to any destination with one transfer, but it requires frequent service of every 5-10 minutes. Many cities operate a *modified pulse radial system*. This system has some crosstown routes which do not go downtown. *Route deviation* has the ability to make stops off the route, but you must provide a complementary service that is handicapped accessible. *Point deviation* says that the bus will arrive at certain locations at certain times of the day. While the bus is guaranteed to go between two points, how it gets to those points is based on where the passengers want to go. *Demand response* is door-to-door service and is scheduled by reservation. An advantage to this type of service is that you only operate this service when people want it. A disadvantage is that it has an expensive per trip cost. The *user side subsidy* concept is that taxi service is used during low transit usage periods, and the transit systems pays a portion or all of the taxi fare for riders.

Mr. McCollom then noted some considerations with respect to hours of operation. Expanded service hours are a major concern in Lincoln. But different service forms can be operated during expanded hours. He noted that an increase in service frequency often does not provide returns to

scale. A new service must be sensitive to market needs.

Mr. McCollom next provided his thoughts on service design. He suggested that we need to consider a family of services. Given the concentration of potential riders at the University, we also need to strongly consider expanded UNL services. He also suggested phasing new services. Finally, we need an understanding of what people want and suggested involving users in the design process.

Mr. McCollom then presented information on funding. He noted total operating funds for StarTran in 2003 were \$7.3 million. Federal funds are allocated by a formula set by Congress, and there is little chance for a significant increase. State funding is low at \$86,000, which is well below the average for states in our peer group. A possible argument is that there is a great need across the state for public transportation funding. Also, transit is part of service transportation, which is underfunded in many states. With respect to local sources, there is a high reliance on local funding. From a narrow transit perspective, most people want dedicated funding. Possible funding options are that the City could establish a dedicated transit tax or establish an independent transit or transportation authority.

Fare revenues include the general population, UNL students, and employees. Most communities believe that passengers should pay a reasonable share of operating costs. Mr. McCollom suggested setting a standard of what a fair share is. UNL students pay \$8 per semester as a non-refundable activity fee, and the students receive a bus pass which can be used on all routes. In return, StarTran receives almost \$300,000 per year for operating costs and \$86,000 per year for bus replacement costs. Some Universities have higher student fees of \$8-\$59 per semester. This suggests that the fee could be increased, but the services must be tailored to student needs. In answering the question of why other universities have embraced transit, one reason is financial in terms of the high cost of parking. Other reasons are that there is limited or no space for campus expansion and to improve the quality of the campus environment in making it pedestrian/bicycle friendly. Mr. McCollom stated that he believes that parking at UNL is a concern. It is car-oriented. Working with the University will require a long game plan. Years of interaction are typically required. Student involvement and support is very important as well. Also, transit must be ready to respond to take advantage of new service opportunities when they arise.

Mr. McCollom noted that select employers can be targeted. Potential targets include the City, State and UNL. This would require aggressive, long term marketing.

Mr. McCollom concluded his presentation by noting the following final points:

- ▶ A variety of options must be considered.
- ▶ A long game plan is needed to influence development patterns and change minds.
- ▶ A plan is a guide, not a blueprint; Lincoln must take advantage of opportunities as they come.
- ▶ Transit must be aggressive and ready to respond.

## **6. Task Force Discussion**

Mr. Pohirieth asked what approaches we can take to educate the community about transit. Mr. McCollom replied that the real education comes when you are solving a problem. For example, if the City is going to do a parking study, that is an opportunity to convey the message that transit can be part of the parking solution.

Ms. Dunn asked if there are opportunities for partnerships with other businesses that are not located downtown. Mr. McCollom responded that employers typically use transit to solve a problem, and if there is not a problem, it is harder to sell.

Mr. Werner asked if there are Cities who develop policy to implement change in transit. Mr. McCollom stated that the only place he has seen this is in the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, which states that you must have adequate parking relative to the building use. Mr. Kern added that in other areas, there are programs in which you can set transit mode share targets, carpooling rate targets, or guaranteed ride home programs. Mr. McCollom noted that there have also been communities who have decided they are not going to build any more parking facilities.

Mr. McCoy asked what the formula for federal funding is based upon. Mr. McCollom replied that it is based on population and population density somewhat, but the main driver is vehicle revenue miles.

Mr. Scholz asked Mr. McCollom to expand upon his thoughts on the relationship with the University. Mr. McCollom responded that most of the relationships at other universities are initiated by the students in voicing their concerns with the transit system. Usually, someone in the finance office of the University supports the use of transit from a financial perspective. Mr. McDowell noted that it has taken six years to implement the \$8 transit fee, and most students do not want to renew the fee, so this presents an obstacle. He added that the University needs about 14,500 parking spaces to meet demand. If they decide not to replace some parking stalls that are lost, they have to, in turn, sell less permits. Those students will still take their cars, but they will park in the neighborhoods. If we implement parking bans in the neighborhoods, then the University has concerns to a certain degree about enrollment decreasing. So, in effect, revenue is decreasing because of selling fewer permits, and transit services would need to increase. In turn, parking fees would also need to increase. It is important to note that the University pays StarTran \$290,000 per year, but that is three times what they receive in state money.

## **7. June 8, 2004 Task Force Meeting**

Mr. Morgan stated that an additional Task Force meeting was added on June 8, 2004 at 4:00 p.m. in Room 113.

## **8. Adjourn**

Mr. Morgan adjourned the meeting at 5:39 p.m.